



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE RETURNS 43 CRIMINAL ALIENS TO HAITI

New Orleans Detention and Removal Officers work closely with Haitian Government

NEW ORLEANS — Haitian criminal aliens who were illegally living in the United States were returned to their home country Monday by the Detention and Removal Office here, a program within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

ICE chartered an aircraft to fly the 43 Haitians, who had exhausted their legal appeals, from the United States to Port au Prince.

Craig Robinson, field office director for ICE New Orleans Detention and Removal Operations, noted the cooperative effort with Haiti. “The Haitian government provided outstanding support to help us make this an especially successful mission,” he said.

In preparation for the flight, five high-ranking members of the Haitian government traveled to New Orleans a week before departure. The officials conducted travel document interviews for more than 100 Haitian detainees, explained the removal process, and contacted detainee family members. This preparation facilitated a smooth release to family members upon arrival in Haiti.

“We work closely with numerous countries using ICE’s unique enforcement tools, including the immigration laws, to promote a higher level of security here at home. Our number-one priority is the removing criminal aliens from the United States.” Robinson heads the ICE New Orleans Detention and Removal Operations office, which includes the five-state area of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee.

The government of Haiti worked with U.S. officials to authorize travel documents for 105 criminal aliens, and coordinate logistics for the flight. “The travel document unit, the Department of State personnel and the budget folks all worked very hard to make this major logistical effort come to fruition,” said Robinson. The Plaquemines’ Sheriff’s Department and other government agencies were instrumental in completing this mission successfully. “The coordination involved was first-rate and provided us a template to use in future operations.”

This repatriation represents the latest in a series of collaborations between Haiti and the U.S. within the last few years. As a result, ICE has successfully repatriated more than 460 Haitian nationals from throughout the United States. Sixty-nine percent of those removed were convicted of crimes in the U.S.

These deportations demonstrate ICE's commitment to restoring integrity to the nation's immigration system, which is reflected in a record year of deportations. ICE formally removed more than 160,000 aliens nationally in fiscal year 2004. More than half of those were criminal aliens.

ICE effects its deportations aboard both commercial and government aircraft. The government's aircraft is run by the U.S. Marshal Service, and is called the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System (JPATS). JPATS is one of the largest transporters of prisoners in the world and handles hundreds of requests every day to move prisoners and criminal aliens nationally and internationally.

There is an automatic 10-year bar against deported aliens from legally re-entering the U.S. "Anyone caught in the U.S. by any law enforcement office after having been previously deported will be presented by ICE officers to the U.S. Attorney for prosecution," said Robinson. "Reentry after deportation is a felony that can carry a possible 20-year prison sentence."

ICE

ICE, the primary investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, was established to bring a unified focus to the enforcement of U.S. immigration and customs laws, with the principal goal of preventing violations by terrorists and other criminals who threaten the nation's security.